GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
RURAL DEVELOPMENT
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1592
ANSWERED ON:09.03.2007
CENSUS OF POOR PERSONS
Kaushal Shri Raghuvir Singh

Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is no provision for conducting the census of poor people in the country and the Government merely updates these statistics based on estimates prepared by National Sample Survey Organisation(NSSO);

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;

(c) whether the adopted criteria to differentiate Below Poverty Line (BPL) from middle classes is exhaustive;

(d) if not, the reaction of the Government thereon;

(e) whether mechanism is available to identify the number of BPL people achieved to the level of Above Poverty Line (APL) from BPL;

(f) if so, the details thereof;

(g) if not, the reasons therefor;

(h) whether the Government has any target and realistic assessment for reduction of poverty ; and

(i) if so, the achievement made by the Government so far?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI CHANDRA SEKHAR SAHU)

(a) to (i): While the Planning Commission estimates poverty at the national and State level from the large sample survey on Household Consumer Expenditure conducted by the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) at an interval of approximately 5 years, the Ministry of Rural Development conducts BPL Census in rural areas at the beginning of each Five Year Plan for identification of the poor for assistance under various poverty alleviation programmes implemented by this Ministry. The first such BPL Census was conducted for 8th Five Year Plan in 1992. Latest BPL Census 2002 was conducted for the 10th Five Year Plan on the basis of methodology recommended by Expert Group. The Expert Group had recommended to carry out BPL Census-2002 on the basis of 13 score based socio-economic parameters for categorization and identification of rural poor as against income and expenditure approach adopted in the earlier Censuses. In accordance with the recommendation of the Expert Group, guidelines were issued to the States to conduct the BPL Census-2002 in such a way that total number of persons identified for assistance under poverty alleviation programmes does not exceed the poverty estimates of Planning Commission for the year 1999-2000 or the Adjusted Share, whichever is higher. In addition, another 10% has been permitted to account for the transient poor. The Survey work had started but in the meanwhile during one of the hearings of a Writ Petition No. 196 of 2001, the Supreme Court passed an order on 5.5.03 that the Union of India will not insist on the States to remove any person from the existing BPL list. Since the BPL Census involved addition/deletion of names in the BPL list, the State Governments were advised not to finalise the BPL Census-2002 list till the stay is vacated. The Supreme Court vacated the stay on 14.2.06 and subsequently, the States have been advised to finalise the BPL list (2002). A two-stage Appeal Mechanism has been introduced to address the grievances of the people.

The methodology for BPL Census 2002 provides for ranking of all rural households depending upon their score based on 13 socio-economic parameters. The States have been given the flexibility to decide the cut off score to identify the rural BPL households which could be uniform for State as a whole or may vary depending upon the local situation. On the direction of the Supreme Court, a provision has already been made in the guidelines to allow new names to be added and ineligible names deleted from the BPL list on a continuous basis during the period to which the list applies. For this purpose, Gram Sabha has been given the power to approve the BPL list.

According to Approach Paper to the 11th Five Year Plan, the average decline in the percentage of population Below the Poverty Line over the period 1993 to 2004 is 0.74 percentage points per year.